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## Talk the talk, or walk the walk? Changing narratives in Europeanisation research

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## **Talk the talk, or walk the walk? Changing narratives in Europeanisation research**

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Over the past two decades, there has been a growing interest in 'Europeanisation', both within and beyond the European Union (EU). The impact of Eastern enlargement in 2004 on both accession and neighbourhood states has attracted scholarly attention, and a consensus currently exists on the success of the EU's transformative power through employing a conditionality mechanism. However, the limits of EU conditionality upon accession countries, neighbourhood 'Europeanisation', in addition to the problems experienced by the EU itself have brought into the question whether the end of Europeanisation research is in sight. Considering this, we critically evaluate the issues discussed in the scholarship on Europeanisation and review several points of interest in relation to EU candidate countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The 'Europeanisation' phenomenon has affected the whole of Europe over the past two decades, from European Union (EU) member states to candidate states, and later to neighbourhood states, and beyond. Whereas a decade ago, it was widely believed that the EU had successfully exported sets of norms and values, rules and policies into its neighbourhood, political developments in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), to the East of the EU and most recently in the EU itself have caused many scholars to wonder whether past views of the Union as an attractive point of reference have been rather exaggerated. As the EU struggles with many crises, ranging from Greek to Ukrainian, Eurozone to Turkish, refugee to refugee populist – scholars have increasingly drawn attention to the decreasing capacity of the Union to pay attention to countries in its immediate neighbourhood<sup>1</sup>. If anything, debates over the past decade doubt the ability of the EU's own institutions to implement necessary economic and political reforms in its own member-states, and as such indicate the limits of the EU's transformative power outside its borders.

There is considerable purchase to this argument among contemporary policy communities in many EU member and candidate countries, but also among lay publics and academics studying the processes of Europeanisation. Indeed, since the introduction of the term, 'Europeanisation' has come to mean many things: from policies applied in candidate countries in the run-up to enlargement, to specific frameworks, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), facilitating change in politics. In parallel to the process of Eastern enlargement of the EU, academic debates on 'accession' and 'neighbourhood' Europeanisation evolved into separate research fields. More recently, the scholarship which had dealt with the Europeanisation of member-states has refocussed upon its effect upon accession countries, contributing to the proliferation of research on a gamut of policies and politicking. This expanding and

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<sup>1</sup> Federica Bicchì, "The Politics of Foreign Aid and the European Neighbourhood Policy Post-Arab Spring: 'More for More' or Less of the Same?," *Mediterranean Politics* 19, no. 3 (September 2, 2014): 318–32, doi:10.1080/13629395.2014.959758.

sub-dividing research area usually relies on the concept of Europeanisation throughout, but evidence that it is being used reflectively is scant. Simultaneously, evidence that progress in the field has been hampered by this lack of reflection is growing. Centrally, we contend that the focus on policies and political processes in case studies has neglected the critical role the political institutions of states play in facilitating as well as in amortising the impact of European institutions. We therefore are suggesting that despite much of the talk, very few scholars have actually committed to ‘walk the walk’ of Europeanisation and focus their attention on the impact domestic institutions have on European organisations’ capacity to effect domestic change in individual states.

To explore when, how and why the scholarship ended up in this situation, we trace the origins of the research on Europeanisation, starting from contemporary concerns about domestic issues on Europeanisation, back to concerns about supranational inputs into domestic matters during the 1990s enlargement process. The preliminary conclusion we draw from this survey is that while in some areas of the scholarship Europeanisation research has gathered less clout than deserved, it has built up repute in other areas where it deserves far less attention.

### **Between the real world process and object of research**

Since the first mention of the term ‘Europeanisation’ in the sense of ‘adjusting to Europe’, much has been written using the term<sup>2</sup>. Regardless of the extreme diversity in this field, conclusive results on what Europeanisation is and, even more so on how it works are few and far between. Europeanisation studies is a ‘broad church’ with sub-groups of scholars focussing on the incorporation of European rules, norms and values into the domestic arenas in a host of states: in old and new member states, future and contemporary candidate countries, as well as in states of the European neighbourhood. If anything, this demonstrates the conceptually untidy use of ‘Europeanisation’ as an outcome of supranational steering processes on domestic policies in states with above average exposure to EU pressures. Remarkably, whereas Schimmelfennig originally proposed to deploy ‘Europeanisation’ as a tool for explaining the ‘real’ impact of EU membership on domestic change in candidate countries, today’s understanding among the scholars is no longer limited to the direct impact of the EU<sup>3</sup>.

The latest research relies on ‘Europeanisation’ not as a tool for explaining the top-down incentives for change, but rather for exploring the degree of domestic alignment in politics, policies and politicking with the ‘European standard’. The process of political change in EU accession and neighbouring countries brought about by ‘adjusting to Europe’ has created different perceptions on the ground about the ‘Europe’ itself. This

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Ladrech, “Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 32, no. 1 (March 1, 1994): 69–88, doi:10.1111/j.1468-5965.1994.tb00485.x; Stanley Henig, “The Europeanisation of British Politics,” in *Trends in British Politics since 1945* (Springer, 1978), 181–193.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig, “The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union,” *International Organization* 55, no. 1 (2001): 47–80.

at times has led to indirect changes in political preferences, political elites' relationships with their societies and of societies themselves that have moved into unanticipated directions and at different speeds. Yet more often than not it is the indirect and unlooked-for impact of future changes in politics that is reflected in the studies of the role domestic actors increasingly play when it comes to the Europeanisation of their own states. It is unsurprising therefore, that the focus on the direct and limited effects of EU involvement that were in high currency a decade ago are no longer *en vogue*.

The prior focus of Europeanisation debates on the top-down impact that international institutions had on domestic political developments has at the present juncture yielded space to concerns over alternative tools for driving domestic change. Many have also been blinded by ideological visions of European organisations as force for positive change, with little depth in assessment of the nature that that change might assume once Europeanisation pressures abate<sup>4</sup>. The recent heightened awareness about the impact domestic institutions and actors have exercised in the process of the approximation of national policies and political process to (perceived) European ones only further demonstrate how 'Europeanisation' is an emotive rather than a factual point of reference.

The underlying normative understanding of 'Europeanisation' is omnipresent in the study of the (notional) impact of 'Europe' on member-states, candidate and neighbourhood countries. These reproduce the discourse on the positive and irreversible impact on domestic policy and political choices of Europeanisation. In this context, the recent trend to engage with bottom-up Europeanisation is evident in the literature. This is particularly the case with studies of Turkey, which stress the influence domestic factors have on dynamic change (or absence thereof), especially since the EU has been showing dwindling interest in this country's accession<sup>5</sup>. It remains unclear whether 'domestic' rather than 'supranational' factors are driving reforms outside the EU, in particular as regards Turkey, but also in Ukraine and the wider MENA region. However, these factors are often challenged in discussions on the de-Europeanisation of

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<sup>4</sup> Claudio M. Radaelli and Romain Pasquier, "Encounters with Europe: Concepts, Definitions, and Research Design," 2006, <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/24315>.

<sup>5</sup> Alper Kaliber, "Contextual and Contested: Reassessing Europeanization in the Case of Turkey," *International Relations* 27, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 52–73, doi:10.1177/0047117812455352; Beken Saatçioğlu, "De-Europeanisation in Turkey: The Case of the Rule of Law," *South European Society and Politics* 21, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 133–46, doi:10.1080/13608746.2016.1147994; Başak Alpan, "From AKP's 'Conservative Democracy' to 'Advanced Democracy': Shifts and Challenges in the Debate on 'Europe,'" *South European Society and Politics* 21, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 15–28, doi:10.1080/13608746.2016.1155283.

Turkey<sup>6</sup>, but also of backsliding<sup>7</sup> and lack of progress in the accession of Macedonia and Bosnia<sup>8</sup>.

These approaches, grappling with sets of complex and interdependent changes in domestic politics, are solidly grounded in the literature on changing forms of governance before accession; they have also spawned (and subsequently promoted) studies of ‘diffusion mechanisms’. For example, Börzel and Risse, as well as Jetschke and Lenz all focus on Europeanisation as a process of diffusion, comprising both direct and indirect transformations in the polities they study.<sup>9</sup> However, while this empirically rich research maps vectors of domestic change onto the potential expectations of the EU from member-states, much of this research suffers from insufficient theoretical grounding of the causalities observed. At times, political change is promulgated by the domestic, at others by supranational actors (as indirect mechanisms involving change), while in other instances changes are initiated by representatives of domestic institutions as in the case of indirect mechanisms of diffusion<sup>10</sup>. Although empirically insightful, such explanations should not be seen as analytically inspired studies of a Europeanisation *process* as they are useful for what they are: post-factum descriptions of *outcomes*.

Similarly, another focus of research has been on domestic governance processes as alternatives to European conditionality<sup>11</sup>. In part, the reference to the spatial dependency of countries undergoing similar interactions with the EU and among each other has been brought up in debates on both accession and neighbourhood Europeanisation in the past. In focussing on illustrative analogies, such as the ‘regatta principle’ (i.e. candidate states’ competition with each other in the race to EU membership), or ‘competitive learning’ (i.e. a candidate’s engagement with the enlargement process), these studies

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<sup>6</sup> Senem Aydın-Düzgit, “De-Europeanisation through Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of AKP’s Election Speeches,” *South European Society and Politics* 21, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 45–58, doi:10.1080/13608746.2016.1147717.

<sup>7</sup> Ulrich Sedelmeier, “Anchoring Democracy from Above? The European Union and Democratic Backsliding in Hungary and Romania after Accession,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 105–21, doi:10.1111/jcms.12082.

<sup>8</sup> M. Soberg, “The Quest for Institutional Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *East European Politics and Societies* 22, no. 4 (2008): 714–37; Nevena Nancheva and Cvete Koneska, “Europeanization Without Europe: The Curious Case of Bulgarian–Macedonian Relations,” *European Politics and Society* 16, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 224–40, doi:10.1080/23745118.2014.996325.

<sup>9</sup> Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse, “Venus Approaching Mars? The European Union’s Approaches to Democracy Promotion in Comparative Perspective,” in *Democracy Promotion in the US and the EU Compared*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 34–60; Anja Jetschke and Tobias Lenz, “Does Regionalism Diffuse? A New Research Agenda for the Study of Regional Organizations,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 20, no. 4 (April 1, 2013): 626–37, doi:10.1080/13501763.2012.762186; Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse, “When Europeanisation Meets Diffusion: Exploring New Territory,” *West European Politics* 35, no. 1 (2012): 192–207.

<sup>10</sup> Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, “From Europeanisation to Diffusion: Introduction,” *West European Politics* 35, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 5, doi:10.1080/01402382.2012.631310.

<sup>11</sup> Sandra Lavenex, “A Governance Perspective on the European Neighbourhood Policy: Integration beyond Conditionality?,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 15, no. 6 (2008): 938–55; Sandra Lavenex and Frank Schimmelfennig, “EU Democracy Promotion in the Neighbourhood: From Leverage to Governance?,” *Democratization* 18, no. 4 (August 1, 2011): 885–909, doi:10.1080/13510347.2011.584730; Frank Schimmelfennig, “Europeanization beyond Europe,” 2009.

place emphasis on choices made by domestic political elites in existing domestic institutional contexts<sup>12</sup>. Similar references to the impact of external illiberal actors on domestic political choices as powerful breaks for democracy promotion<sup>13</sup> drag attention away from the role of the EU and its institutions in the process of ‘Europeanisation’<sup>14</sup>.

In this context, we find studies of sectoral cooperation between the EU and neighbourhood countries that are linked to formalised European frameworks for direct and indirect democracy promotion. This segment of the contemporary Europeanisation literature usually stands apart from comparative regionalism studies with a specific focus on the EU.<sup>15</sup> And yet, both engage with processes of transformation in non-EU states that are geared towards either by sets of domestic factors, or by means of external incentives to converge with the norms of the so-called ‘European model’ of governance<sup>16</sup>. Such an understanding of Europeanisation in both the ‘diffusion literature’, and in the regional-focussed research explains the transformation towards a more ‘European model’, explicitly as an *outcome* by tapping various – in part unrelated – factors. Such a broad understanding of ‘Europeanisation’ shows the powerful appeal of the term as a substitute for a toolbox containing multiple explanatory paradigms, but one which rarely sets out the conditions for, or indeed the timeframes of the concept’s effectiveness in individual case studies. It appears, therefore, that more recent changes in Turkey, the lack of progress on the road to Europe in Ukraine, and the stalled progress of accession for Western Balkan countries should result in a comprehensive revision of the uses of Europeanisation: This may either involve greater attention to discourses constitutive of the social and political reality in accession and candidate countries, or towards a self-referential discourse that masks the lack of progress made in real-world politics.

All of this gives past research a distinct civilizational tinge that posits domestic factors as obstacles for domestic change, and international involvement as a driver for domestic alignment with the EU and its pivotal member-states.<sup>17</sup> Much of the resultant scholarship has engaged in counterfactual reasoning on actor strategies in the domestic politics of accession and candidate states, despite successfully disentangling core

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<sup>12</sup> e.g. Tobias Böhmelt and Tina Freyburg, “Diffusion of Compliance in the ‘Race towards Brussels?’ A Spatial Approach to EU Accession Conditionality,” *West European Politics* 38, no. 3 (May 4, 2015): 601–26, doi:10.1080/01402382.2014.943523.

<sup>13</sup> See the volume Thomas Risse and Nelli Babayan, “Democracy Promotion and the Challenges of Illiberal Regional Powers: Introduction to the Special Issue,” *Democratization* 22, no. 3 (April 16, 2015): 381–99, doi:10.1080/13510347.2014.997716.

<sup>14</sup> Julia Langbein, “European Union Governance towards the Eastern Neighbourhood: Transcending or Redrawing Europe’s East–West Divide?,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 157–74, doi:10.1111/jcms.12083; Natalia Timuş, “Democracy for Export: The Europeanisation of Electoral Laws in the East European Neighbourhood,” *East European Politics* 29, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 289–304, doi:10.1080/21599165.2013.807803.

<sup>15</sup> Jetschke and Lenz, “Does Regionalism Diffuse?”

<sup>16</sup> Dirk Lehmkuhl, “Some Promises and Pitfalls of Europeanization Research - Springer,” 348, accessed August 16, 2016, [http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230584525\\_25](http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230584525_25).

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Risse, “‘Let’s Argue!’: Communicative Action in World Politics,” *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000): 1–39; Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

explanatory domestic factors from domestic perceptions of loosely defined European norms.<sup>18</sup> It seems that despite bottom-up as well as the so-called ‘bottom-up-down’ process-tracing and careful analysis of reasoning put forward by domestic actors, many scholars have engaged with discourses on Europeanisation, rather than with Europeanisation proper.

The period of the EU’s Eastern enlargement laid the groundwork for expediting the differentiation between the discourses on Europeanisation and its real-world impacts on a wide range of research outputs exploring the (then perceived to be real) effects of the EU on candidate countries. During this period of time, the theme of ‘Eastern enlargement’ emerged as a distinct sub-field of the ‘Europeanisation of candidate countries’,<sup>19</sup> although at all times building upon the earlier work on ‘membership Europeanisation’. While usefully, Europeanisation during the period of Eastern enlargement demonstrated vividly that some of the past trends related to the differential impact of the EU on accession countries were still valid, the focus lay squarely on the impact of conditionality in the East of Europe.<sup>20</sup>

The literature on Eastern accession Europeanisation research has relied heavily on top-down, EU-driven adaptation pressures while treating domestic factors such as adjustment costs, the role of veto players and support from the domestic opposition as change-hindering intervening variables.<sup>21</sup> Much of this scholarship relied on research designs that undervalued the intervening domestic conditions as either positive, or negative factors in adopting the rationale of the EU. Rarely have domestic factors been viewed as facilitating change outside the narrowly prescriptive EU framework for institutional readjustment. Although accurate to a degree, this research has overrated the ability of the EU to enforce top-down change while being culpable of neglecting alternative routes to desired outcomes of policy change in the run-up to EU membership<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Markus Haverland, “Does the EU Cause Domestic Developments? Improving Case Selection in Europeanisation Research,” *West European Politics* 29, no. 1 (2006): 134–46; Lehmkuhl, “Some Promises and Pitfalls of Europeanization Research - Springer”; Paolo R Graziano, “From Local Partnerships to Regional Spaces for Politics? Europeanization and EU Cohesion Policy in Southern Italy,” *Regional & Federal Studies* 20, no. 3 (2010): 315–33; Vivien A. Schmidt and Claudio M. Radaelli, “Policy Change and Discourse in Europe: Conceptual and Methodological Issues,” *West European Politics* 27, no. 2 (2004): 183–210.

<sup>19</sup> Ulrich Sedelmeier, *Europeanisation in New Member and Candidate States* (CONNEX / NEWGOV, 2011), 217, <http://edoc.vifapol.de/opus/volltexte/2011/3115/>.

<sup>20</sup> Tanja A. Börzel et al., “Obstinate and Inefficient: Why Member States Do Not Comply with European Law,” *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 11 (2010): 1363–90; Heather Grabbe, *The EU’s Transformative Power: Europeanization through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); James Hughes, “‘Exit’ in Deeply Divided Societies: Regimes of Discrimination in Estonia and Latvia and the Potential for Russophone Migration,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43, no. 4 (2005): 739–69.

<sup>21</sup> Milada Anna Vachudova, “EU Leverage and National Interests in the Balkans: The Puzzles of Enlargement Ten Years On,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52, no. 1 (2014): 122–138, doi:10.1111/jcms.12081.

<sup>22</sup> Caitríona Carter and Romain Pasquier, “The Europeanization of Regions as ‘Spaces for Politics’: A Research Agenda,” *Regional & Federal Studies* 20, no. 3 (July 1, 2010): 295–314, doi:10.1080/13597566.2010.484565; Frank Schimmelfennig and Hanno Scholtz, “Legacies and

In contrast to the aforementioned trend in the literature at the time, a few adopted alternative perspectives to demonstrate the independent impact of the ‘domestic’ on the (still ill-defined) outcomes of Europeanisation, such as voluntary forms of policy emulation in accession states<sup>23</sup>. Despite the fact that the most peculiar cases in the Eastern European accession process ‘lay at the borderline between domestic choice and EU-induced rule adoption’<sup>24</sup>, the transformative power of Europe has remained the dominant theme.

The pull of the EU on countries with favourable domestic political conditions has been of interest to the largest section of the scholarship<sup>25</sup>. Only time will tell if, in the aftermath of the current multiple European crises, this scholarship has also exploited ‘the European factor’ as a *deus ex machina* for the literature at large<sup>26</sup>. For example, Radaelli<sup>27</sup> has suggested that so little of the EU’s agency in the process of domestic change has led to biased accounts of it as a result of the downgrading of domestic factors to hindering (yet at all times, unsystematic) interventions.

While both ‘membership’ and ‘accession’ Europeanisation literatures demonstrated the transformative power that the EU can have on domestic politics, the extent of domestic change has remained differential, indicating that more attention should have been paid to institutional changes ahead of EU accession. As such, cases which have considered the role domestic factors have played in the process of change have remained scarce and, in our view, neglectful of one central theme in the real-life changes often perceived to represent the same package of Europeanisation processes: the process of state-building in accession countries.

In fact, this very notion has been obscured by parallel societal processes across the wider European region. As social pressures mounted on national political elites to align domestic practices with those observed (usually, from afar) in the EU member-states, the reference to the Europeanisation of public spaces has entered public debate. In the aftermath of the Gezi Park protests in Turkey, the contestation of political representation in the aftermath of Ukraine’s Euromaidan revolution and the multiple popular mass protests in the Western Balkans, copious reference to ‘Europeanisation’ has been made. In these instances, the publics of the ‘lesser consolidated democracies’

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Leverage: EU Political Conditionality and Democracy Promotion in Historical Perspective,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 3 (May 1, 2010): 443–60, doi:10.1080/09668131003647820.

<sup>23</sup> Wade Jacoby, *The Enlargement of the European Union and NATO: Ordering from the Menu in Central Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> Ulrich Sedelmeier, “Is Europeanisation through Conditionality Sustainable? Lock-in of Institutional Change after EU Accession,” *West European Politics* 35, no. 1 (2012): 20–38; Judith G. Kelley, “International Actors on the Domestic Scene: Membership Conditionality and Socialization by International Institutions,” *International Organization* 58, no. 3 (2004): 425–57.

<sup>26</sup> Maarten P. Vink and Paolo Graziano, “Challenges of a New Research Agenda,” in *Europeanization*, ed. Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008), 16, [http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-230-58452-5\\_1](http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-230-58452-5_1).

<sup>27</sup> Claudio M. Radaelli, “Europeanization: The Challenge of Establishing Causality,” in *Research Design in European Studies*, Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), 5, [http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137005090\\_1](http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137005090_1).



waiting in the accession queue voiced demands for greater direct involvement of the EU in domestic political processes. However, as can still be observed in the case of Macedonia's Colourful Revolution, public outrage has so far not resulted in speedier EU accession processes, nor in the anticipated change of the political direction of travel.

Popular demand for tighter EU controls over domestic political elites have, however, resulted in the growing interest of the EU itself in promoting and emphasising the importance of civil society as a pivotal stakeholder in the process<sup>28</sup>. Yet, the direct influence of the EU in candidate and neighbourhood countries has been limited and came, yet again, to signify the potential for European organisations to pressure policymakers in accession countries not via 'carrots and sticks' but through oversight by grassroots organisations. As a result, we increasingly see scholarly studies on the Europeanisation of civil society as tools that facilitate people-to-people networks in support of societal transformations, and usher in grounds for political change in the medium-term. Yet, this scholarly debate takes grassroots understandings of and demands for the (perceived) European rules and policies seriously, and not the sets of still ill-defined European norms as their analytical tools.

From the start, the EU's initiatives towards its neighbours have been subject to criticism on a variety of grounds, but mainly referring to the inherent weakness of top-down policy delivery. This has contributed to partial and selective analyses of the reasons for the successes and failures of reforms on the ground, in both member-states and accession states, and presently also in neighbourhood countries<sup>29</sup>. These have reflected the increasingly complex nature of the EU itself, but also of the decisions and crucially policymaking processes in the states targeted by the Union proper.

### **Taking stock of Europeanisation research**

Looking back over two decades of Europeanisation research, the 2004 enlargement round has been a watershed in the scholarship: While the growing number of EU member-states has been of help for theorising different vectors in the EU and its member-states' choices, the assessment of the toolbox of policy preferences and their differential outcomes across countries and issue areas has become much vaguer. For instance, the recent analyses by Borzel demonstrate convincingly that governments in the Southern Caucasus have effectively instrumentalised the EU's own priorities and only selectively adopted reform packages that could be adjusted to their domestic

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<sup>28</sup> Bicchi, "The Politics of Foreign Aid and the European Neighbourhood Policy Post-Arab Spring," 324.

<sup>29</sup> Tanja A. Börzel and Vera van Hüllen, "One Voice, One Message, but Conflicting Goals: Cohesiveness and Consistency in the European Neighbourhood Policy," *Journal of European Public Policy* 21, no. 7 (August 9, 2014): 1033–49, doi:10.1080/13501763.2014.912147; Tanja Börzel and Aron Buzogány, "Governing EU Accession in Transition Countries: The Role of Non-State Actors," *Acta Politica* 45, no. 1 (2010): 158–82; Tom Casier, "To Adopt or Not to Adopt: Explaining Selective Rule Transfer under the European Neighbourhood Policy," *Journal of European Integration* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 37–53, doi:10.1080/07036337.2010.526709.

preferences.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, in Ukraine and in Moldova some progress has been observed as regards the early stages of launching reforms, but changes in many areas have remained selective and partial, much like in the MENA region where initial commitment to reform was only matched by their frustratingly limited implementation.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the announced new approach of the EU towards its neighbouring countries, the 'new' element therein is highly debatable with 'less of the same' describing the limited change in practice towards neighbouring countries and less funding disbursed to target countries.<sup>32</sup> More specifically, Noutcheva attests little change in the ENP goals on mobility and migration, conflict management and economic development. Conversely, she identifies only a minor changes in democracy, described as 'deep and sustainable', and complimented with being a 'universal value' for the EU and neighbourhood countries<sup>33</sup>. Her analysis suggest that both the goals and instruments of the ENP before and after the Arab Spring identifies a growing gap in the rhetorical and factual commitment to the promotion of democracy (as well as on sanctioning relapse), despite growing emphasis on diplomatic involvement of the EU in its neighbourhood.<sup>34</sup> The emphasis on ongoing political reform as a precondition for economic support has been embedded in the 'more-for-more' approach introduced in 2011 that has sought to strengthen democratic governance and entrench democratisation processes across European neighbourhood countries.<sup>35</sup> But while on the practical level, the EU has modified policies towards non-members several times, some observers have claimed that the lessons of the Arab Spring have been the driving force behind this, rather than of past experiences with Europeanisation<sup>36</sup>.

As in Noutcheva's work<sup>37</sup>, much of the criticism expressed by the scholarship on Europeanisation, however, has come from those who demonstrate the lack of fit between candidate states' abilities to live up to the requirements of reform as projected from the EU, and the EU's own commitment to reward states' successful

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<sup>30</sup> Esther Ademmer and Tanja A. Börzel, "Migration, Energy and Good Governance in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood," *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 582, doi:10.1080/09668136.2013.766038; Tanja A. Börzel and Yasemin Pamuk, "Pathologies of Europeanisation: Fighting Corruption in the Southern Caucasus," *West European Politics* 35, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 80, doi:10.1080/01402382.2012.631315.

<sup>31</sup> Casier, "To Adopt or Not to Adopt."

<sup>32</sup> Bicchi, "The Politics of Foreign Aid and the European Neighbourhood Policy Post-Arab Spring."

<sup>33</sup> Gergana Noutcheva, "Institutional Governance of European Neighbourhood Policy in the Wake of the Arab Spring," *Journal of European Integration* 37, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 27–29, doi:10.1080/07036337.2014.975987.

<sup>34</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, "The Politics of EU Conditionality: The Norm of Minority Protection during and beyond EU Accession," *Journal of European Public Policy* 15, no. 6 (2008): 842–60; Schimmelfennig and Scholtz, "Legacies and Leverage."

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Silander and Martin Nilsson, "Democratization without Enlargement? The European Neighbourhood Policy on Post-Communist Transitions," *Contemporary Politics* 19, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 448, doi:10.1080/13569775.2013.835115.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Emerson, "Just Good Friends? The European Union's Multiple Neighbourhood Policies," *The International Spectator* 46, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 51, doi:10.1080/03932729.2011.628091.

<sup>37</sup> Noutcheva, "Institutional Governance of European Neighbourhood Policy in the Wake of the Arab Spring."

implementation of it.<sup>38</sup> The lack of a parsimoniously defined – or indeed, an agreed upon notion of what European norms should do, not to mention what they are – have added an extra level of difficulty when outlining the potential impacts of the ENP on target states. As Melo notes, the ENP is ‘neither enlargement, nor foreign policy’ and as such does not possess instruments or leverage vis-à-vis target countries.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, despite its distinct position among the sets of European initiatives, the ENP has been thought of – and indeed written about – as a part of the EU’s enlargement process, assessed in terms of its efficiency to promote change in the neighbourhood. This has been dissected into different dimensions in the scholarship since the evolution of the differentiated approaches to ENP countries, such as the Black Sea Synergy in 2008 and the Eastern Partnership in 2009.

Regrettably, we are unable to find realist accounts of reasons for the EU’s own over-ambitious priorities in a range of issue areas (such as e.g. democracy promotion), or of the weakness of domestic embrace of the external norms. Equally, while the tensions between the EU and member-states about joint ownership of policy developments have been readily identified in research, there has been little written on joint actions to overcome the asymmetrical design of such policies such as the ENP, largely because of a difference of ambitions among ENP countries, as well as because of powerful tools in the hands of the Commission to offer all the benefits bar formal membership status to countries like Ukraine and Turkey.

Considering the horizons for research on the ENP, scholars have focussed on processes inside and outside the EU to converge largely on the positive outcomes achieved. This is done in variety of ways. For example, when one adopts a more comprehensive outlook for exploring changes in ENCs under the pressure of the so-called illiberal regional heavyweights like Russia and China, societal factors are increasingly drawn into the explanatory matrix. This adds rather than reduces the complexity of explanation.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, the role of wider sets of dependencies is such that embeddedness in global economies and reliance on aid<sup>41</sup>, tutelage by the international financial donors<sup>42</sup> and the restrictive oversight by the Council of Europe (CoE) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)<sup>43</sup> have all been added to the list of explanatory factors.

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<sup>38</sup> Börzel and Hüllen, “One Voice, One Message, but Conflicting Goals.”

<sup>39</sup> Francisco Melo, “Perspectives on the European Neighbourhood Policy Failure,” *Journal of European Integration* 36, no. 2 (February 23, 2014): 189–93, doi:10.1080/07036337.2014.885301.

<sup>40</sup> Esther Ademmer, “Interdependence and EU-Demanded Policy Change in a Shared Neighbourhood,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 22, no. 5 (May 28, 2015): 671–89, doi:10.1080/13501763.2014.968189; Nelli Babayan, “The Return of the Empire? Russia’s Counteraction to Transatlantic Democracy Promotion in Its near Abroad,” *Democratization* 22, no. 3 (April 16, 2015): 438–58, doi:10.1080/13510347.2014.993973.

<sup>41</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, “Linkages and the Promotion of Democracy: The EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood,” *Democratization* 20, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 553–91, doi:10.1080/13510347.2012.659014.

<sup>42</sup> Langbein, “European Union Governance towards the Eastern Neighbourhood.”

<sup>43</sup> Timuş, “Democracy for Export.”

These studies underscore that global issues are at work in countries that are undergoing the process of Europeanisation, yet whether changes are the result of, or indeed exclusive to Europeanisation has not been addressed systematically. The studies cited all build upon the earlier findings on country- and/or sector-related conditions that allow transgovernmental policy networks to maintain resilience in the light of external pressures<sup>44</sup>, but whether these networks operate thanks to – or maybe despite – Europeanisation is less clear. As we have outlined above, we believe many of the ideas in the research are indebted to earlier debates on the role of ‘domestic factors’ forming the preferences of governments in European neighbouring states<sup>45</sup>, policy-specific conditionality<sup>46</sup>, impact of liberalization on political stability<sup>47</sup> and the effectiveness of externally set provisions for domestic actors<sup>48</sup>. Scholarly attention during and immediately after the Eastern enlargement has postulated rather than synthesised knowledge on the impact of European factors on (new) member states:<sup>49</sup> The fact that this notional impact is still labelled ‘Europeanisation’ is largely due to differences in the outcomes of domestic political process and policymaking across the set of countries.

Exploring the impact of Europeanisation on domestic change, therefore, lacks sequential theorising on the reasons for difference, as well as on the mechanics of Europeanisation. Much of the scholarship agrees that during the period of Eastern enlargement two explanations have been useful to outline pathways in domestic change: One positing the rational choice of *political actors* in accession states who have been enticed to change now in exchange for benefits later, and another placing *political institutions* into a prominent position to steer change into the direction perceived to be appropriate and necessary. Not only have these two explanations emphasized the pivotal role of different actors (political elites respectively political institutions), but also the sustainability of political change (superficial respectively deep). They also have variegated explanations of domestic buy-in, thus ensuring the irreversibility of Europeanisation.

In fact these two explanations for the different paths of Europeanisation tail back to the differential impact of the EU on political institutions which have been widely explored in the first-generation literature that focussed on member-states’ Europeanisation. The

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<sup>44</sup> Tina Freyburg et al., “EU Promotion of Democratic Governance in the Neighbourhood,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 16, no. 6 (2009): 916–34; Tina Freyburg, “The Two Sides of Functional Cooperation with Authoritarian Regimes: A Multi-Level Perspective on the Conflict of Objectives between Political Stability and Democratic Change,” *Democratization* 19, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 575–601, doi:10.1080/13510347.2012.674363.

<sup>45</sup> Börzel and Pamuk, “Pathologies of Europeanisation”; Antoaneta Dimitrova and Rilka Dragneva, “Shaping Convergence with the EU in Foreign Policy and State Aid in Post-Orange Ukraine: Weak External Incentives, Powerful Veto Players,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 658–81, doi:10.1080/09668136.2013.766040.

<sup>46</sup> Ademmer and Börzel, “Migration, Energy and Good Governance in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood”; Aron Buzogány, “Selective Adoption of EU Environmental Norms in Ukraine. Convergence Á La Carte,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 609–30, doi:10.1080/09668136.2013.766039.

<sup>47</sup> Börzel and Hüllen, “One Voice, One Message, but Conflicting Goals.”

<sup>48</sup> Casier, “To Adopt or Not to Adopt.”

<sup>49</sup> Tanja A. Börzel, “The Transformative Power of Europe Reloaded,” 2010, [http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/docs/receive/FUDOCS\\_document\\_000000005300?lang=de](http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/docs/receive/FUDOCS_document_000000005300?lang=de).

Eastern enlargement Europeanisation scholars on the other hand have systematically marginalised an institutions-focussed perspective. Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) provided a laboratory for scholars to explore the short-term impact of external pressures – or conditionality – in candidate states and as such welcomed rational choice models for explanation. In the context of state-building and societies undergoing consolidation around the newly erected institutions of the state, it did make sense to treat political entrepreneurs as strategically-driven and goal-oriented actors. These credibly appeared to be rational utility maximisers for their constituencies given the situation and their shared preference for EU accession.<sup>50</sup>

The institutionalist perspective put forward by Cowles *et al* therefore was a hard sell from the start.<sup>51</sup> The emphasis on the impact domestic institutions have on political actors' preference formation had invited re-thinking of Europeanisation as a process of social learning about the appropriate and 'proper, i.e. a socially accepted behaviour in a given situation.'<sup>52</sup> But placing the focus of analysis on European norms, values and identities as structural constraints, system changing factors were as difficult to pin down then as it is now. No wonder, therefore, that the project of seeing Europeanisation as a process of comprehensive social and political learning in the context of changing political institutions would have required studying social as well as political processes. Rather than perusing a narrow-gauge analysis of policy change, this type of Europeanisation research would have placed the emphasis on the emergence of new norms, ideas and collective understandings in the established institutional context followed by norm internalization and the development of new identities via socialization and social learning.<sup>53</sup>

Scoping sets of responses by political entrepreneurs to expectations of external (i.e. European) actors appeared, therefore, a much more straightforward, though laborious task. This rational choice perspective on Europeanisation via sets of policy changes has offered a parsimonious account of changes in the horizon of opportunity with few immediate constraints on actors' choices. Börzel and Risse<sup>54</sup>, for example, emphasised opportunities over constraints in the process of re-allocation of resources, leading to the differential empowerment of actors at the domestic level. Only later has Börzel<sup>55</sup> inserted a critical corrective as to the role of factors influencing the desired outcomes, including multiple veto points and mediating formal (i.e. political) institutions that would constrain adaptation processes to the externally set expectations as perceived by

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<sup>50</sup> Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*; James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (Free Press, 1989).

<sup>51</sup> Maria Green Cowles, James A. Caporaso, and Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change* (Cornell University Press, 2001), 8.

<sup>52</sup> Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse, "When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, March 13, 2002), 8, <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=302768>.

<sup>53</sup> March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics*.

<sup>54</sup> Börzel and Risse, "When Europe Hits Home."

<sup>55</sup> Börzel, "The Transformative Power of Europe Reloaded," 8.

domestic actors.

It is in this context that the buzzword ‘goodness of fit’ came in as a necessary condition for thinking about domestic change as a result of (and exposure to) Europeanisation.<sup>56</sup> Most of the research dealing with Europeanisation has been facing this common threat with caution: although a degree of ‘misfit’ is necessary for Europeanisation to be effective domestically, the measurement and assessment of difference between European and domestic policies, processes, and expectations have been hard to benchmark. Regardless of this, the ‘goodness of fit’ between the European and domestic levels determined the set of factors which could be studied to ascertain change.<sup>57</sup> However, the failure to identify the objects and subject of changes, as well as the lack of engagement with the notion of political change in this earlier literature on Europeanisation has hampered its own progress. The emphasis on rational choice on momentous processes resulted in the over-reliance of Europeanisation research on the analysis of political entrepreneurs’ choices that matched the goals they shared with their electorates (EU membership at all costs). It has removed political institutions – and as such, sociological institutionalism – from systematic accounts of domestic change that have been labelled ‘top-down Europeanisation’, merely focussing on the impact of (variously defined) European actors on weak and largely unconsolidated candidate and later neighbouring states.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the development of the Europeanisation scholarship has been marred by comparisons of the tentative outcomes of EU-driven, top-down processes that are only notionally useful to analytically benchmark processes not yet complete. We believe, therefore, that the weakness of the Europeanisation scholarship in relation to accession and ENP states has been due to scholars’ reluctance to engage with the fundamental notion of political change in the region exposed to Europeanisation (however one chooses to define it). Essentially conceived, European institutions are viewed as agents of political change in target countries, yet much of the scholarship cited above is complacent in viewing European institutions either as a homogenous actor/s, or as sets of overlapping European institutional initiatives that have a joint agenda by virtue of sharing agency. In so doing, it appears, Europeanisation research has been subverting coherent understandings about the EU’s own commitment to the norms and values it preaches. This is largely due to the fact, as we shall discuss below, that Europeanisation research is in fact little more than research on *Europeanisation discourse*, not on the change in the name of ‘Europe’.

### **Europeanisation research after the Europeanisation process**

There is a clear sense of optimism in much of the debate in the Europeanisation scholarship that the changing focus from a set of Member-States to sets of Candidate Countries and later to Neighbourhood Countries will allow continuous discussion of the

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<sup>56</sup> Börzel and Risse, “When Europe Hits Home.”

<sup>57</sup> Cowles, Caporaso, and Risse-Kappen, *Transforming Europe*.

EU's impact on target countries. Yet as EU conditionality has become a much weaker driver of domestic change in the Western Balkans and Turkey over the past decade, how much room is there left for optimism?

Although the EU has retained its superior bargaining power by which it could entice and rationalise domestic change in exchange for credible benefits, there is also a shared view of enlargement fatigue. The EU's willingness to accept new member states is, according to explanations found in the literature, limited in part by its own credibility to impose sanctions on countries insufficiently prepared for membership, or by the EU itself delaying the progress on the *acquis*.<sup>58</sup> Increasingly, scholarly voices have emerged suggesting that the EU's capacity to deliver the 'ultimate reward of membership' at low cost to the current candidate states is disappearing rapidly.<sup>59</sup> This is further compounded by the extension of membership criteria beyond the narrow scope of those outlined in the Copenhagen criteria and more stringent monitoring for the current candidate states on these past and new requirements. In the accession process of the Western Balkan states and Turkey, the EU has stressed the absorption capacity of domestic polities and the acquiescence of the European public.<sup>60</sup> Tocci emphasizes that in the case of Turkey, country-specific issues have mutated into 'informal conditions' for membership: the size and growth of country's population are in no way related to the Copenhagen criteria and/or the new criteria regarding the rule of law.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, issues related to peace-building, regional cooperation, and security sector reforms have increasingly

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<sup>58</sup> Othon Anastasakis, "The EU's Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans: Towards a More Pragmatic Approach," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 8, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 369, doi:10.1080/14683850802556384; Tanja A. Börzel and Digdem Soyaltin, "Europeanization in Turkey - Stretching a Concept to Its Limits?," KFG Working Paper (Free University Berlin, 2012), 7, <https://ideas.repec.org/p/erp/kfgxxx/p0036.html>; Stephan Renner and Florian Trauner, "Creeping EU Membership in South-east Europe: The Dynamics of EU Rule Transfer to the Western Balkans," *Journal of European Integration* 31, no. 4 (July 1, 2009): 452, doi:10.1080/07036330902919988; Solveig Richter, "Two at One Blow? The EU and Its Quest for Security and Democracy by Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans," *Democratization* 19, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 512–13, doi:10.1080/13510347.2012.674360; Sedelmeier, *Europeanisation in New Member and Candidate States*, 31; Gözde Yilmaz, "It Is Pull-and-Push That Matters for External Europeanization! Explaining Minority Policy Change in Turkey," *Mediterranean Politics* 19, no. 2 (May 4, 2014): 249, doi:10.1080/13629395.2013.838443.

<sup>59</sup> Anastasakis, "The EU's Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans," 372; Florian Bieber, "Building Impossible States? State-Building Strategies and EU Membership in the Western Balkans," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 10 (December 1, 2011): 1799, doi:10.1080/09668136.2011.618679; Börzel and Soyaltin, "Europeanization in Turkey - Stretching a Concept to Its Limits?," 7; Arolda Elbasani, "EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans: Strategies of Borrowing and Inventing," *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans Online* 10, no. 3 (December 1, 2008): 302, doi:10.1080/14613190802493600; J. O'Brennan, "Enlargement Fatigue and Its Impact on the Enlargement Process in the Western Balkans," 2013, 37, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SR018/OBrennan.pdf>; Anna Szolucha, "The EU and 'Enlargement Fatigue': Why Has the European Union Not Been Able to Counter 'Enlargement Fatigue'?", *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 6, no. 1 (May 13, 2010): 4–5.

<sup>60</sup> Gergana Noutcheva and Senem Aydın-Düzgit, "Lost in Europeanisation: The Western Balkans and Turkey," *West European Politics* 35, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 68, doi:10.1080/01402382.2012.631313.

<sup>61</sup> Nathalie Tocci, "Europeanization in Turkey: Trigger or Anchor for Reform?," *South European Society and Politics* 10, no. 1 (April 1, 2005): 77, doi:10.1080/13608740500037973.

been prioritized; meanwhile, the security dimension has been added as a criterion specific to Western Balkans.<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, unlike the accession process of postcommunist Eastern European states, the cases of the Western Balkans and Turkey allow us to refocus on the essentials of the EU accession process. Yet again, whereas past work on Europeanisation has underlined the rational choice of domestic political entrepreneurs, we believe that domestic institutional designs should take centre stage in the analyses of Europeanisation processes in the Western Balkans and Turkey.<sup>63</sup> Factors such as governments' ability to circumvent legally entrenched legal norms, the perils of state weakness and 'limited statehood' are all a reflection of the recent scholarship on hampered domestic change in these states.<sup>64</sup>

We should take research on Turkey as an indicative case for demonstrating the deficits of Europeanisation research at large, and miscalculations of the rational choice perspectives about the (anticipated) effects of EU conditionality more specifically. Since the importance of the EU accession has been diminishing for Turkey, we should have seen not only the effects of conditionality dwindle, but also an increasing mismatch between European and Turkish domestic policy outputs, political throughputs and normative inputs. However, before July's failed coup, what some refer to as 'Europeanisation' seemed to remain emotive, and as such inconsistent and selective.<sup>65</sup> Thus the direction of change in Turkey's domestic political landscape and the revisions to its political institutions conducted as a result President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's new mandate will provide empirical detail for scholars to test existing explanations of domestic change. There is certainly a wealth of studies with which to engage. On the one hand, much research draws attention to domestic elites as actors — rather than mediators — of Europeanisation,<sup>66</sup> being ineptly involved in the formation of government preferences<sup>67</sup>, social movements<sup>68</sup>, incentives for and strategies of the

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<sup>62</sup> Anastasakis, "The EU's Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans," 368; Elbasani, "EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans," 300; Richter, "Two at One Blow?," 509; Szolucha, "The EU and 'Enlargement Fatigue,'" 8.

<sup>63</sup> Başak Alpan and Thomas Diez, "The Devil Is in the 'Domestic'? European Integration Studies and the Limits of Europeanization in Turkey," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 1–10, doi:10.1080/19448953.2013.864180; Bieber, "Building Impossible States?"; Yilmaz, "It Is Pull-and-Push That Matters for External Europeanization! Explaining Minority Policy Change in Turkey"; Vachudova, "EU Leverage and National Interests in the Balkans"; Elbasani, "EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans"; Börzel and Soyaltin, "Europeanization in Turkey - Stretching a Concept to Its Limits?"; Tanja A. Börzel, "When Europeanization Hits Limited Statehood," 2011, [http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/docs/receive/FUDOCSS\\_document\\_000000011699?lang=en](http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/docs/receive/FUDOCSS_document_000000011699?lang=en).

<sup>64</sup> Bieber, "Building Impossible States?"; Elbasani, "EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans"; Noutcheva and Aydin-Düzgit, "Lost in Europeanisation.", Vachudova, "EU Leverage and National Interests in the Balkans"

<sup>65</sup> Yilmaz, "It Is Pull-and-Push That Matters for External Europeanization! Explaining Minority Policy Change in Turkey."

<sup>66</sup> Kaliber, "Contextual and Contested."

<sup>67</sup> Meltem Müftüler-Baç, "Turkish Foreign Policy, Its Domestic Determinants and the Role of the European Union," *South European Society and Politics* 16, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 279–91, doi:10.1080/13608746.2011.577947; Beken Saatçioğlu, "AKP's 'Europeanization' in Civilianization,



political elites<sup>69</sup>, the strategic use of appeals to the EU<sup>70</sup> and policy entrepreneurship<sup>71</sup>. On the other hand, the adverse consequences of the Europeanisation process in relation to freedom of expression<sup>72</sup>, the rule of law<sup>73</sup>, and for politically mobilized civil society<sup>74</sup> should highlight the effective role of European involvement in mediating, if not steering domestic institutional developments.

The Western Balkans constitutes another ‘borderline case’ of Europeanisation since the targeted states in the region do not have the necessary capacity for the EU’s transformative power to effectively drive reforms.<sup>75</sup> Domestic conditions, such as state capacity, unsettled borders, strong clientelism of political elites, and entrenched elites have all been a part of the scholarship on Europeanisation of the region.<sup>76</sup> These studies have all been pointing to the role domestic institutions play in effective engagement with the sets of European norms, regulations and policies. It is our contention that this should be taken more seriously in the future. Many political institutional structures in the Western Balkans have been extremely unfavourable for domestic political as well as social change, and as such have driven research on Europeanisation of the region into the doldrums. This is unlikely to change, as the involvement of international institutions in state-building across the Western Balkans is likely to slide further down the European agenda. But as we have outlined above, it is the focus on the short-term rationality of actors on the ground who implement politics that has been at the centre of research on Europeanisation. Far too little attention has been paid to political institutions already in place to facilitate those actors’ choices of and successful implementation of policies delegated from the EU down. Most importantly, we believe that the cases of the Western Balkan states now indicate that ‘Europeanisation’ as a political project and also as a scholarly set of discursive projects by political entrepreneurs requires a revision to

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Rule of Law and Fundamental Freedoms: The Primacy of Domestic Politics,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 86–101, doi:10.1080/19448953.2013.864185.

<sup>68</sup> Burcu Özdemir, “The Role of the EU in Turkey’s Legislative Reforms for Eliminating Violence against Women: A Bottom-Up Approach,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 119–36, doi:10.1080/19448953.2013.864187.

<sup>69</sup> Börzel and Soylaltin, “Europeanization in Turkey - Stretching a Concept to Its Limits?”; Saatçioğlu, “De-Europeanisation in Turkey.”

<sup>70</sup> Defne Günay and Kaan Renda, “Usages of Europe in Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Middle East,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 47–67, doi:10.1080/19448953.2013.864183.

<sup>71</sup> Mehmet Ugur and Dilek Yankaya, “Policy Entrepreneurship, Policy Opportunism, and EU Conditionality: The AKP and TÜSİAD Experience in Turkey,” *Governance* 21, no. 4 (October 1, 2008): 581–601, doi:10.1111/j.1468-0491.2008.00414.x.

<sup>72</sup> Gözde Yilmaz, “From Europeanization to De-Europeanization: The Europeanization Process of Turkey in 1999–2014,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 24, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 86–100, doi:10.1080/14782804.2015.1038226.

<sup>73</sup> Saatçioğlu, “De-Europeanisation in Turkey.”

<sup>74</sup> Alper Kaliber, “De-Europeanisation of Civil Society and Public Debates in Turkey: The Kurdish Question Revisited,” *South European Society and Politics* 21, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 59–74, doi:10.1080/13608746.2016.1152656.

<sup>75</sup> Börzel, “When Europeanization Hits Limited Statehood,” 6; Bieber, “Building Impossible States?,” 1784–85.

<sup>76</sup> Börzel, “When Europeanization Hits Limited Statehood,” 6; Bieber, “Building Impossible States?,” 1785; O’Brennan, “Enlargement Fatigue and Its Impact on the Enlargement Process in the Western Balkans,” 40; Vachudova, “EU Leverage and National Interests in the Balkans,” 13.

maintain momentum.

Over the past decade the focus of research has been on the limits of the EU's transformative power to effectuate change in the region, connected to a concern with domestic actors in the process of enlargement conditionality. As we argue, however, more importance should be granted to the pivotal role domestic institutions play in the background for the process. The case of Turkey provides just one such insightful point for revision: Aydın-Düzgit discusses how Europeanisation operates in the area of discourse on political change and spills over onto both societies and political elites' expectations of the efficacy of the state.<sup>77</sup> Far from drumming up concerns about the 'nasty consequences of Europeanisation', we can therefore conclude that much of the literature on the impact of Europeanisation has dealt implicitly with discourses on the potential, as opposed to actual impact which EU membership would offer for domestic political entrepreneurs to exploit weaknesses of barely consolidated democratic institutions to their own advantage.

Little wonder, therefore, that the Europeanisation literature still encounters areas for further research: Patchy theorising on cause and effect in domestic change particularly requires more systematic empirical datasets, not only on countries (such as old member-states), but also on entire regions (e.g. Southern Caucasus); a lack of agreement on the empirical remit of the concept itself opens up leeway for scholarship on 'reverse Europeanisation' and normative bias in assessment invites discussions on the so-called 'adverse consequences' of Europeanisation. Overall, however, the repeated references to processes, whereas in fact outcomes are being studied further compromises the explanatory value of Europeanisation debates and crucially the lifetime of descriptive scholarship produced.

### **Instead of conclusion: Whither Europeanisation research?**

Let us therefore finally unpack the meanings invested into 'Europeanisation' as a tool for analyses. Since Schmidt and Radaelli's work, it has been clear that two perspectives on Europeanisation exist: one focuses on it as a process, while the other treats Europeanisation as sets of top-down outcomes by different, in part overlapping European organisations focussed on the nation-state<sup>78</sup>. Indeed, the considerable bulk of the literature has used 'Europeanisation' as a short-hand term for the top-down impact of the EU on domestic politics, polity and policy. This has largely been due to the influential top-down, unidirectional view of the process as advocated by Radaelli, Schimmelfennig, and Sedelmeier.<sup>79</sup> Yet, with the EU in multiple crises and the ability

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<sup>77</sup> Aydın-Düzgit, "De-Europeanisation through Discourse."

<sup>78</sup> Schmidt and Radaelli, "Policy Change and Discourse in Europe: Conceptual and Methodological Issues."

<sup>79</sup> Sedelmeier, *Europeanisation in New Member and Candidate States*; Radaelli, "Europeanization"; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*; but also, Marika Lerch and Guido Schweltnus, "Normative by Nature? The Role of Coherence in Justifying the EU's External Human Rights Policy," *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 2 (2006): 304–21; Ece Ozlem

of the European centre to advise, pressure and oversee domestic change in tatters, there are limits to the helpfulness of any established analytical tool in a top-down understanding of Europeanisation. In our paper we have considered these aforementioned problematic legacies of the scholarship on Europeanisation and explored the potential available in the use of the concept for analyses of processes of social and political change across the wider European region. There are still many issues left to ‘talk the talk’ of Europeanisation.

Our interim assessment of the scholarship on Europeanisation, however, is pessimistic: we believe that in order to expand the theoretical toolbox on Europeanisation, we ought to untangle past research findings on policy changes conducted from a normative standpoint from those engaging in analyses of a narrower scope, especially functional changes on the interface of the politics and societies affected. It is in this context that we attest that particularly the scholarship on Europeanisation as a one-way road to Brussels has reached a dead-end. At the same time, those referencing Europeanisation as a horizon of opportunity for statecraft have been under-explored and offer much needed leeway for empirical studies.

The main claim of this paper has been that whereas the use of the concept in past research has been extremely effective in focussing on outcomes not on processes, it has profited from a lack of epistemic clarity about how Europeanisation works and capitalised on an ontological fuzziness of what Europeanisation is. There remain, therefore, some considerable lessons to learn from the past scholarship. Despite our overall pessimism in our assessment on the work of Europeanisation to date, we believe that more can be gained from an understanding of Europeanisation as a peer-to-peer learning dynamic, as well as by disengaging from overtly normative accounts of Europeanisation’s unidirectional impacts on member, candidate and neighbourhood states.

Neither should the scholarship on Europeanisation as a process be laid to rest. Regardless of widely held concerns about the fate of the EU itself, its enlargement and/or coherence of the European normative space conjured particularly as a result of the momentous Brexit vote in the UK, Europeanisation as a tool of analyses bears some considerable value for explaining sets of political, social, economic and not least cultural processes across the wider European space. If only it was applied systematically, it would also gain unprecedented heuristic value to tap not only processes of political and economic change, but also broader social transformations in the region.

So far, this spectrum in Europeanisation research has provided scholars a range of issues to explore dynamics of either Europeanisation, but also increasingly de-Europeanisation as part of strategic use of unconsolidated institutions by utility maximising political entrepreneurs. In the end, such developments signify the need for

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Atikcan, “European Union and Minorities: Different Paths of Europeanization?,” *Journal of European Integration* 32, no. 4 (2010): 375–92.

further scholarly attention to the role played by political institutions in new and old, candidate and accession states as well as in neighbourhood states all striving to consolidate their domestic political regimes in the light of perceived or real pressures from European institutions.